

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 AEC-11 DRC-01 IO-14

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R 301213Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4716

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USDEL MBFR VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 13750

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, GW, FR

SUBJECT: FRG DEFENSE MINISTER'S VIEWS ON FUTURE FRENCH
COOPERATION WITHIN THE ALLIANCE

BEGIN SUMMARY: FRG DEFMIN LEBER BELIEVES THE
POSSIBILITIES ARE GOOD NOW FOR INCREASED FRENCH COOPERA-
TION WITHIN THE NATO ALLIANCE, ALTHOUGH THE FRENCH HAVE.
A DIFFICULT PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIER TO SURMOUNT. A

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POSSIBLE AVENUE FOR INCREASED FRENCH COOPERATION WITHIN NATO

IS IN THE FIELD OF JOINT ARMAMENTS PROJECTS, BUT THE GERMANS FIND THAT THEIR NUMEROUS MULTILATERAL EFFORTS WITH VARIOUS NATO PARTNERS PRACTICALLY PRECLUDE BILATERAL COOPERATION WITH THE FRENCH. THE FRENCH NOW CONSIDER THAT FRANCE IS TO BE DEFENDED ON THE RIGHT BANK OF THE RHINE, AND THE GERMANS ARE HOPEFUL THAT JOINT CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR THE FORWARD MOVEMENT OF FRENCH TROOPS IN AN EMERGENCY MAY BE UNDERTAKEN.
END SUMMARY

1. IN A DISCUSSION WITH SENATOR JOHN G. TOWER (R-TEXAS) ON AUGUST 28, FRG DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER VOICED HIS OPINION ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF INCREASED FRENCH COOPERATION WITHIN THE ALLIANCE. LEBER BELIEVES GISCARD WILL NOT WORSEN FRANCE'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE NATO ALLIES. ON THE CONTRARY, HE FEELS THE FRENCH PRESIDENT WILL SEEK BETTER COOPERATION WITHIN THE ALLIANCE. LEBER POINTED OUT THAT GISCARD MUST MOVE CAUTIOUSLY IN THIS AREA FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL REASONS, SINCE FRENCH PRIDE MUST BE SALVED. LEBER BELIEVES GISCARD IS STUDYING HOW FRANCE CAN QUIETLY AND WITHOUT PUBLIC FANFARE MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION. WHEN LEBER SAW FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER SAUVAGNARGUES IN JULY, THE LATTER POINTED OUT THAT THE FRENCH POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE EUROGROUP COULD NOT BE LOGICALLY DEFENDED. WERE THE EUROGROUP NOT IN EXISTENCE, SAUVAGNARGUES SAID THE FRENCH WOULD HAVE TO INVENT IT. HOWEVER, IT IS POLITICALLY DIFFICULT FOR THE FRENCH TO JOIN NOW.

2. LEBER NOTED THE FRENCH ARE INTERESTED IN GREATER ARMAMENTS COOPERATION IN PARTICULAR WITH NATO COUNTRIES. WHILE THE FRENCH CONSISTENTLY BRING UP THE POSSIBILITY OF GREATER FRENCH-GERMAN ARMAMENTS COOPERATION, LEBER POINTS OUT THAT FRG MULTILATERAL COOPERATION WITH OTHER NATO COUNTRIES HAS NARROWED SIGNIFICANTLY THE RANGE OF POSSIBLE BILATERAL COOPERATIVE PROJECTS. LEBER BELIEVES GREATER FRENCH COOPERATION WITHIN THE ALLIANCE COULD READILY BE INDUCED THROUGH SUCH PROJECTS, BUT THIS PRESENTS A DILEMMA FOR THE GERMANS SINCE MEANINGFUL BILATERAL PROJECTS ARE PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND.
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 13750

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3. LEBER TOLD THE SENATOR THAT THE GERMANS INVARIABLY
POSE TWO QUESTIONS WHEN THE FRENCH AND GERMAN DEFMINIS
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HOLD THEIR TWICE YEARLY MEETINGS. THE FIRST CONCERNS WHERE FRANCE IS TO BE DEFENDED. IN PAST YEARS THE FRENCH ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION WAS THAT THE DECISION WHERE TO DEFEND WOULD BE TAKEN BY THE GOF DEPENDING UPON THE CIRCUMSTANCES OBTAINING AT THE TIME. LEBER THEN NOTED THAT ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO UNDER POMPIDOU THE ANSWER CHANGED, WITH THE FRENCH STATING THAT DEFENSE WOULD NOT BE ON THE LEFT BANK OF THE RHINE. THE SECOND QUESTION THE GERMANS THEN ASK IS, IF THE DEFENSE OF FRANCE WILL BE ON THE RIGHT BANK OF THE RHINE, WHY DON'T THE FRENCH CONSIDER PLANNING FOR SUCH A CONTINGENCY. LEBER MADE THE POINT THAT SUCH PLANNING IS NECESSARY IF FRENCH FORCES BASED IN THE FRG ARE TO BE EXPECTED TO PLAY AN EFFECTIVE ROLE IN THE DEFENSE OF CENTRAL EUROPE BEFORE THE SITUATION BECOMES SUCH THAT THEIR INTRODUCTION INTO THE FIGHTING WOULD BE TOO LATE. LEBER HAS SUGGESTED THAT THE FRENCH CONSIDER MOVING THEIR FORCES TO A MORE FORWARD POSITION. IN THE PAST THE FRENCH MERELY STATED THAT THEY WOULD STUDY THE QUESTION. NOW WITH A CHANGE IN THE FRENCH PRESIDENCY AND THE POSSIBILITY OF NEW DEPARTURES IN FRENCH SECURITY POLICY, LEBER HOPES THE FRENCH MAY UNDERTAKE JOINT CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR THE FORWARD MOVEMENT OF FRENCH TROOPS IN AN EMERGENCY. LEBER SAID HE REITERATES THESE POINTS WHENEVER HE MEETS HIS FRENCH COUNTERPART, AND THAT CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT DOES THE SAME AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY.

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